

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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USSS-00 DRC-01 /075 W

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R 170610Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6478

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 6901

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: KOREAN DOMESTIC SITUATION

BEGIN SUMMARY: HAVING RESCINDED EMERGENCY MEASURES, PRESIDENT PARK AGAIN FACES PROBLEM OF WHETHER LESS STRINGENT MEANS CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTROL RESURGENCE OF DISSIDENCE FROM STUDENT AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. DISSIDENT ELEMENTS, ENCOURAGED BY KNOWLEDGE OF GOVT CONCERN FOR ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE IN TERMS OF UN DEBATE ON KOREA AND IMPENDING VISIT OF PRESIDENT FORD, HAVE USED GREATER RELATIVE FREEDOM FROM LEGAL RESTRAINTS TO INCREASE TEMPO OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER PROTEST ACTIVITIES AGAINST PARK'S REGIME AND YUSHIN CONSTITUTION. ROKG HAS THUS FAR RELIED PRIMARILY ON THREATS AND PRESSURE AGAINST SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND CHURCH AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING FOREIGN MISSIONARIES. RESULT HAS BEEN RASH OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURES, BUT STUDENT/CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP APPEARS DETERMINED CONTINUE STRUGGLE FOR RELEASE OF THOSE TRIED UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES AND FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION. GOVT APPEARS HAVE MEANS TO FORCE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS INTO GREATER CAUTION, IF NOT SUBMISSION. HOWEVER, SHOULD DISSIDENTS FORCE ISSUE, EMBASSY BELIEVES ROKG WOULD REGARD CONTROL OVER DOMESTIC SCENE AS OVERRIDING ANY SECRET

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CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT OR UN DEBATE.

ROKG HAS ALREADY ISSUED STERN WARNINGS THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO ITS TOLERANCE OF DISSIDENT ACTIVITY, AND MEASURES IT MIGHT TAKE INCLUDE FORCED SHUTDOWN OF UNIVERSITIES AND EVEN REIMPOSITION OF EMERGENCY MEASURES.
END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE NO CLEAR INSIGHT INTO WHY PRES. PARK DECIDED IN AUGUST TO LIFT EMERGENCY MEASURES, BUT DECISION WAS PROBABLY BASED ON COMBINATION OF FACTORS INCLUDING EXPECTATION OF PUBLIC SYMPATHY OVER LOSS OF HIS WIFE, AWARENESS OF GROWING INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN KOREA ON EVE OF UNGA, AND FEELING THAT TIME HAD COME FOR PERIOD OF MODERATION SINCE COURTS MARTIAL HAD COMPLETED TRIALS AND APPEALS OF THOSE ARRESTED UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES.

2. PARK DOUBTLESS ANTICIPATED SOME REVIVAL OF DISSIDENT ACTIVITY IN ATMOSPHERE OF RELATIVE FREEDOM PROVIDED BY LIFTING OF EMERGENCY MEASURES, BUT PROBABLY WAS WILLING ASSUME RISK IN HOPE THAT SEVERITY OF ACTIONS TAKEN UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES WOULD HAVE LASTING EFFECT ON POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS. HOWEVER, DURING SEPT. PRAYER MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS BY CHRISTIAN (PRIMARILY CATHOLIC) ELEMENTS PROVIDED FOCUS FOR ANTI-GOVT ACTIVITIES. BEGINNING IN LATE SEPT., STUDENT BODIES AT UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT COUNTRY BEGAN TO JOIN STRUGGLE, HIGHLIGHTED BY CLASHES WITH POLICE AT PRESTIGIOUS KOREA AND SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN EARLY OCTOBER. THEMES OF BOTH STUDENT AND CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN DEMANDS FOR RELEASE OF PRISONERS SENTENCED UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES AND INCREASINGLY MORE OVERT POLITICAL DEMANDS FOCUSING ON RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY.

3. ROKG HAS THUS FAR USED POLICE TO RESTRAIN STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND TO PREVENT CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS FROM CONDUCTING PARADES FOLLOWING PROTEST PRAYER MEETINGS, BUT HAS NOT RESORTED TO LARGE SCALE ARRESTS. AS IN DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR, PRESIDENT PARK ON ARMED FORCES DAY GAVE A CLEAR WARNING THAT HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE CHALLENGES TO YUSHIN SYSTEM. PARK'S TOUGH LINE HAS BEEN REITERATED BY OTHER SENIOR GOVT OFFICIALS BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. TO DATE, THESE WARNINGS HAVE NOT INHIBITED EITHER STUDENTS OR THE CATHOLIC ANTI-GOVT ACTIVISTS ALTHOUGH THEY APPEAR

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TO HAVE HAD SOME DAMPENING EFFECT ON THE OPPOSITION NDP LEADERS. HOWEVER, GOVT HAS BEGUN TO APPLY FIRM AND DIRECT PRESSURE AGAINST SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND CHURCH AUTHORITIES.

4. WITH REGARD TO UNIVERSITIES, MINISTER OF EDUCATION HAS PUBLICLY WARNED THAT THE UNIVERSITY HIERARCHY MUST CONTROL SITUATION ON THEIR CAMPUSES OR RISK CLOSURE AND OTHER PUNITIVE MEASURES, INCLUDING WITHDRAWAL OF CHARTERS AND DISMISSAL OF

UNIVERSITY OFFICERS. BOTH HE AND THE HOME MINISTER PARK KYONG-WON HAVE ALSO PUBLICLY STATED GOVT WILL TAKE A MUCH TOUGHER APPROACH TOWARDS STUDENT AGITATORS AND STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS WHO CLASH WITH POLICE.

5. AT SAME TIME, GOVT IS MOVING ON SEVERAL FRONTS TO CONTROL ITS CHRISTIAN CRITICS. AT DIPLOMATIC LEVEL, GOVT DISPATCHED FONMIN KIM TO ROME TO IMPRESS ON VATICAN NEED FOR CATHOLIC HIERARACHY TO STAY OUT OF KOREAN DOMESTIC POLITICS. IN SEOUL WE HAVE GOTTEN INFORMAL WARNINGS ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN MISSIONARIES AND INCREASING GOVT SENSITIVITY OVER THEIR ACTIVITIES. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT KCIA OVERNIGHT DETENTION OF AMERICAN METHODIST MISSIONARY GOERGE OGLE MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED, AT LEAST BY KCIA, AS SIGN TO FOREIGN MISSIONARIES THAT GOVT WILL TAKE TOUGHER APPROACH WITH THEM. BOTH KOREAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS ARE UNDER CONTINUING SURVEILLANCE AND STUDENTS CAN NO LONGER USE CHURCHES AS SANCTUARIES FOR PLANNING AS WAS DONE IN 1973 FALL DEMONSTRATIONS.

6. FITTING INTO THIS PATTERN IS MEASURED GOVT POLICY TOWARDS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. OPPOSITION HAS BEEN GIVEN OUTLET FOR SETTING FORTH ITS VIEWS AND PRESSING CABINET MINISTERS IN ASSEMBLY QUESTIONING. OPPOSITION VIEWS ARE ALSO GIVEN REASONABLE COVERAGE IN PRESS BUT, GOVT HAS MADE CLEAR FIRST THAT IT WILL NOT PERMIT OPPOSITION TO ENGAGE IN EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE TACTICS AND SECOND THAT IT WILL NOT AGREE TO CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION MOVES AT THIS STAGE.

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ACTION EA-10

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 6901

7. A SIGNIFICANT THREAT IN CURRENT DOMESTIC SITUATION IS NOV. 22-23 VISIT OF PRESIDENT FORD. OPPOSITION ELEMENTS OBVIOUSLY HOPE VISIT WILL ACCOMPLISH TWO THINGS. FIRST, THEY HOPE THAT THE FACT OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT WILL INHIBIT THE PARK GOVT FROM TAKING STRONG REPRESSIVE COUNTER-MEASURES AGAINST ITS CRITICS. SECONDLY, THEY BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT MAY BE OCCASION FOR SOME U.S. PRESSURE ON ROKG RE ITS DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION. THERE ARE RUMORS CIRCULATING TO EFFECT STUDENTS AND OTHER ANTI-GOVT ACTIVISTS MAY TRY TO PEAK LARGE SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST GOVT (NOT AGAINST PRESIDENT FORD) AT TIME OF VISIT. AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, THIS WOULD BE WISHFUL THINKING RATHER THAN CONCRETE PLANNING, GIVEN NEED FOR GREATER STUDENT MOMENTUM THAN NOW EXISTS OR GOVT IS LIKELY TO ALLOW. FOR ITS PART, GOVT HAS BEEN EXPLICIT IN WARNING CRITICS THAT THERE ARE NO CONDITIONS TO THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT AND THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE MISLEAD INTO THINKING GOVT WILL TOLERATE ACTIONS THREATENING EITHER THE YUSHIN SYSTEM OR THE DOMESTIC ORDER BECAUSE OF THE VISIT. EMBASSY HAS ALSO SOUGHT TO DAMPEN ANY EXPECTATIONS FROM PRESIDENT'S VISIT IN ITS CONTACTS WITH OPPOSITION.

8. TO DATE ALL OF THE ABOVE ANTI-GOVT ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN HANDLED BY THE POLICE WITH RELATIVE EASE AND THEY HAVE NOT IN SECRET

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FACT INVOLVED UNDULY LARGE NUMBERS, WITH EXCEPTION OF OCT. 9 CATHOLIC SERVICE. STUDENT ACTIVISTS APPEAR TO BE ONLY AT BEGINNING OF THEIR EFFORTS TO STIMULATE BROADER STUDENT ANTI-GOVT PROTESTS. IMPETUS FOR ORGANIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY DEMONSTRATIONS SEEMS TO BE CAMPUS STUDENT GOVT LEADERS, WHILE CATHOLIC ACTIVITIES ARE SPARKED BY YOUNGER CLERGY AND LAYMEN.

9. THESE PROTESTS ACTIVITIES TO DATE CLEARLY INDICATE THE CONTINUED AND DEEP ALIENATION OF SIGNIFICANT SECTORS OF THE EDUCATED CIRCLES FROM THE GOVT. ALSO, THE GOVT IS CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE LABOR AGITATION BY CHRISTIANS OR OTHERS GIVEN THE CURRENT DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION. HOWEVER, SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO VISIBLE COALESCING OF ANTI-GOVT ACTIVISTS SUCH AS OCCURRED IN THE NOV-DEC 1973 PERIOD ON THE ISSUE OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION, THERE IS NO CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ANY SIGNIFICANT INTER-UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATION OR OF MAJOR COORDINATION BETWEEN STUDENTS, CHRISTIANS AND POLITICIANS. (WE DO SUSPECT STUDENT ACTIVISTS AS A MATTER OF COURSE TRY TO ORGANIZE ACROSS THE UNIVERSITIES.)

10. AT THIS POINT, THE GOVT IS NOT LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO

TAKE FURTHER VISIBLY REPRESSIVE ACTIONS. IT ALSO WOULD PREFER NOT RISKING INTERNATIONAL REACTION BY TOO HEAVY-HANDED MOVES AGAINST EITHER CHRISTIANS OR FOREIGN MISSIONARIES. AND IT WOULD NOT WISH TO REIMPOSE THE EMERGENCY MEASURES UNLESS ABSOLUTELY FORCED TO DO SO. AT SAME TIME, GOVT IS ALREADY IN PROCESS OF TAKING TOUGHER STAND AGAINST OPPONENTS. IT HAS MADE CLEAR IT WILL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE WHATEVER FURTHER ACTIONS IT BELIEVES NECESSARY TO CONTROL THE INTERNAL SITUATION, AND PARTICULARLY OVERT DEMONSTRATIONS.

1. IN NEAR TERM, WE BELIEVE THIS MEANS THAT GOVT WILL CONTINUE THE VERY HEAVY PRESSURES ON THE UNIVERSITIES TO CONTROL STUDENTS AS WELL AS TAKE STRONG POLICE MEASURES. IF REQUIRED, WE EXPECT GOVT WILL BE PREPARED TO MOVE EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER TO CLOSE DOWN THE UNIVERSITIES FOR THE SEMESTER IF THEY DO NOT QUIET DOWN. IN A SIMILAR FASHION, THE GOVT IS READY TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH ITS OTHER CRITICS, POLITICAL AND CHRISTIAN, IF THEY MOVE TOWARD ORGANIZING SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS.

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12. AT THIS POINT, GOVT APPEARS TO HAVE THE MEANS TO FORCE ITS CRITICS INTO GREATER PRUDENCE, IF NOT SUBMISSION, AND CLOSURE OF UNIVERSITIES WOULD REMOVE TEMPORARILY THE MOST VOLATILE ELEMENT IN CURRENT POLITICAL EQUATION -- THE STUDENTS. HOWEVER, THE INTERNAL SITUATION REMAINS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR THE GOVT WITH ITS CHRISTIAN AND STUDENT OPPONENTS NOW FORCING IT TO A TOUGH PUBLIC STANCE IT WOULD RATHER HAVE AVOIDED IN TERMS OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT AND THE UNGA CONSIDERATION OF THE KOREAN QUESTION.
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